

REMARKS

Applicant has cancelled pending claims 1-157, and added new claims 158-181 in an effort to clarify the distinctions between the claimed invention and the prior art of record cited by the Examiner in the Office Action dated May 19, 2003.

A novel and important aspect of the present invention is the ability of message senders and receivers not only to define rules that are used to determine automatically in which medium (e.g., as fax mail, voice mail or electronic mail) messages will be sent and received, but also to alter such medium after a message has been sent. A message receiver, for example, could utilize a telephone access interface to intercept a fax message (which might otherwise be received via a fax machine, or possibly be converted into an image file attachment to an electronic mail message, in accordance with a previously specified rule), and cause that fax message to be converted into an audio stream (e.g., by utilizing both optical character recognition to convert the message into text, and text-to-speech conversion to generate an audio stream) that can be played over the telephone.

This ability to modify the communication medium even after a message has been sent provides users of the claimed invention with unprecedented flexibility not found in Cohn (US Pat No 5,740,231), Larson (US Pat No 5,825,854), Gordon (US Pat No 5608786) or Levac (US Pat No 5,872,926). Users might find themselves away from a computer where they can access their electronic mail, even if they had the forethought to specify a rule that converted voice and fax messages into electronic mail attachments. The present invention nevertheless enables such users to utilize any telephone to access such messages and listen to them as audio streams (causing the

system to convert messages, if necessary). Even if no previously specified rule was applicable, users could cause such messages to be converted into other media— e.g., into image file or audio file electronic mail attachments for subsequent retrieval.

In view of the foregoing Amendments and Remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is now in condition for allowance and respectfully requests such action.

Respectfully submitted,

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